



# DON'T GET PLAY-GROUNDED!

Using Positive Engagement Strategies to Promote Physical Activity

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Physical activity is critical to the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of every child. There are several ways to promote physical activity at home or in the classroom including dance, sports, games and free play. Some children will be naturally drawn to these activities while others find it difficult to engage. Using positive engagement strategies in fun, playful social settings are key to promoting physical activity.

It is also important to know about strategies that are ineffective and in some cases not permitted. Most of these involve pressuring a child to do an activity or taking physical activity away as a form of punishment, both of which develops a negative experience around physical activity.



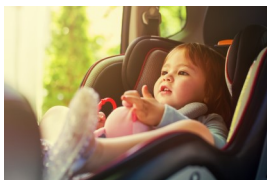
## Do not FORCE a child to engage in physical activity as a form of punishment

Children should never be forced to participate in physical activity, but rather be *invited* to participate. Encourage participation using fun, motivational strategies (e.g. allow them to be the leader, choose the activity, or call out the commands). Physical activity should also never be used to punish a child (e.g. forcing a child to run outside as a form of behavior management). These actions by teachers or parents may cause children to develop negative feelings toward physical activity.



## AVOID USING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A REWARD FOR ONE CHILD AND NOT ANOTHER!

When physical activity time is rewarded conditionally (for some and not others) based on behavior and/or used as a behavior management tool (withhold all together), then children may not get the physical activity time they need.



## Do not WITHOLD physical activity from a child as a form of punishment

Withholding physical activity from children deprives them of health benefits and the opportunity to develop fundamental movement skills necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Withholding physical activity is not acceptable while caring for infants and toddlers, (e.g., leaving a child in an infant carrier for long periods of time). Confining a child as a form of punishment by any means is not permitted.

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EXTENSION

College of Agriculture,  
Biotechnology & Natural Resources

# DO NOT REQUIRE

## Physical Activity as Punishment

Adults should never demand excessive physical exercise as punishment such as telling a child to run on the playground to release energy associated with negative behaviors like talking too much, hitting or running inside the classroom<sup>2</sup>

# DO NOT WITHHOLD

## Physical Activity as Punishment

Adults should never withhold physical activity as punishment such as taking away classroom playtime to complete other activities the child may not have finished or for bad behavior.<sup>2</sup>

"I told you not to run around in the classroom! Maybe you need to go outside and run around the playground until you're tired."

**Instead**

"Wow! You sure have a lot of energy! Let's all take an energy break and do a hip-hop dance together."



"You can't go outside because you didn't finish cleaning up your area."

**Instead**

"Let's all help Brandon clean up his area together so we can go outside!"

"You were not nice to Katrina so you can't go outside and play with everyone else."

**Instead**

"In our classroom we are kind to our friends. Let's find a game we can play together outside"

Leaving a child in his car seat because she is crying and you feel that she "needs to stop"

**Instead**

Pick up the child or place her in a safe area where she can crawl around while you assess her needs.

"Samuel is the only one that listens to me, so he gets extra time to play today."

**Instead**

"Samuel, thank you for being a good listener. We can all go outside a little early to play today!"



## BEST PRACTICES

There are many alternative forms of positive guidance which would be beneficial to use that do not involve physical activity as a reward or punishment:

- ◆ Direct the child to a new activity
- ◆ Sit and talk with the child until he or she is ready to play
- ◆ Tell the child what is expected in a simple, positive manner
- ◆ Give a child positive encouragement
- ◆ Recognize a child who behaves in the expected manner

## IT'S THE LAW

Physical activity should never feel like pain or punishment to a child. In many states in the U.S., **using physical activity as punishment is considered Corporal Punishment**, which means "physical pain inflicted on the body of a child as a penalty for disapproved behavior."<sup>3</sup>

**Corporal punishment is illegal in most states.**

## REFERENCES

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2. Caring for Our Children - Program Activities for Healthy Development. (n.d.). Retrieved November 03, 2017, from <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/2.2.0.9>. Slide 35
3. SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators. (2009). Using physical activity as punishment and/or behavior management [Position statement]. Reston, VA